

12. “I’m Bored and There’s Nothing to Do” – Program Ideas

There’s no law that says you have to provide programs and special activities for your teen summer reading participants. Some reading programs may be more successful when they serve as just that – reading programs. You may decide to conduct just one program, or two, or five...or none! Remember, listen to your teens and plan accordingly. The sections that follow will give you ideas for formats and types of programs.

Impromptu YA Activities

Not all young adult programs or activities need to be scheduled, structured, or take a lot of preparation. As a matter of fact, many teens are reluctant to attend scheduled programs. Look for opportunities to reach out to reluctant teens.

There may be times during the summer when several young adults seem to be just hanging out and visiting with their friends. Try to take a few minutes to interact with these patrons in a fun and constructive manner. Have an impromptu “personalized” young adult program.

- ☺ Observe the interests of the teens. Approach them with a question or activity that relates to that interest.
- ☺ Be casual, friendly and spontaneous. Never be pushy!
- ☺ Don’t be dismayed if they don’t want to have anything to do with you. At least you have made a positive contact and they know they are welcome.
- ☺ Remember to thank or praise participants.

Examples of Impromptu (“Personalized”) Programs

Several teens are sitting around discussing music. Walk by with *Billboard* or another magazine. Stop and ask if they would look through it and give suggestions on some new music CDs to buy for the collection.

Ask a group of middle school girls if they can teach you how to make a friendship bracelet. Offer them embroidery floss to make their own.

Ask a group of high school students (especially boys) to show you a new yo-yo or card trick. Have extra yo-yos or cards available so several can participate.

Several teens are sitting at a table looking bored. Bring paper and scissors to the table and ask if they would like to help decorate an area. Let them cut snowflakes, color paper eggs, glue lace on paper hearts. Praise them for their contribution.

Passive Programming

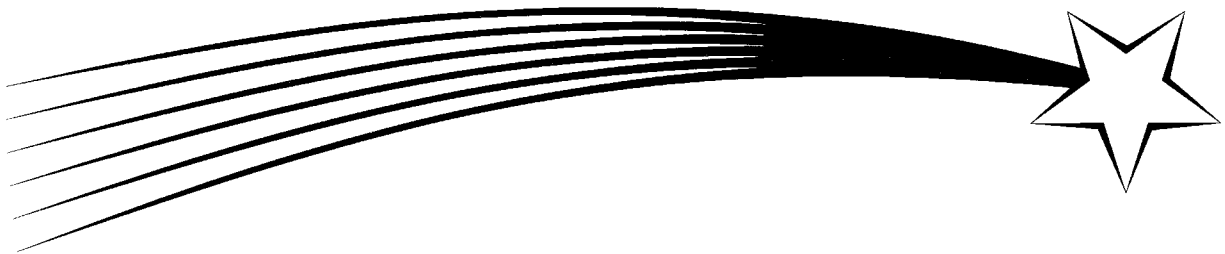
Self-directed, paper-based activities can be counted as participation in a program. Scavenger hunts, word puzzles, book review forms, and trivia contests can be reproduced and left near the YA area to be completed. They could be returned to the library staff or simply left out to be enjoyed. If you choose to count participation in these activities toward your monthly program attendance statistics, be sure to count the number of copies you put out and subtract what is left to get an accurate participation statistic.

Teen Game Night at the Library

A game night at the library can be one of your most successful programs. Whether you have a bunch of teens, or just three or four, they are almost guaranteed to have fun. And often they make new friends!

1. Send a press release to your local newspaper, television and radio stations, and middle and senior high schools for inclusion in their news.
2. Adapt the sample flier and distribute copies at schools, malls, bookstores and anywhere else youth congregate. Plaster your library with them.
3. Purchase soda and paper goods.
4. Make copies of the scavenger hunt and madlib from this manual, or create your own.
5. Set up card tables, chairs and board games. (Pictionary is almost always a hit; Boggle, Scrabble, Star Wars Trivial Pursuit are also popular. If you have Pictionary, set up an easel & flip chart with markers.)
6. Order pizza or other snacks.

See the Appendix for a Sample Schedule and Flyer



Poetry Slam or Open Mike Night

Poetry slams are fun competitions. People usually sign up to read one or more poems in round robin; judges, not usually experts, but people from the audience, rate the poems. The finalists read again usually for three rounds until a winner is chosen. There is a moderator/emcee.

Open Mike Nights offer people a chance to step up and read their original works, similar to a talent show. There is no judging.

Either of these can be low budget, low resource programs, or ones that you can pour some extra money and time into. If you have the space and money, both work well as a "coffeehouse." Set up small tables around the room; decorate the room with a coffeehouse or other theme. Subdued lighting and candles work well. Serve hot coffee, flavored teas, hot chocolate and cold drinks, along with cookies or donuts.

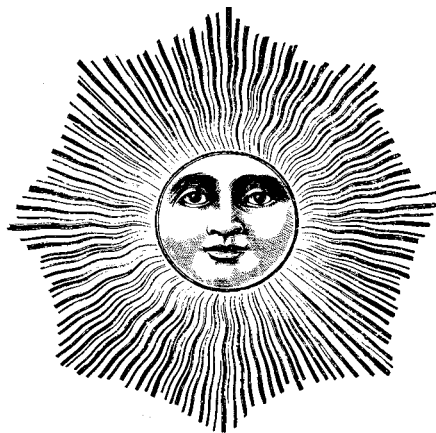
1. If you are conducting a poetry slam, choose three judges from your audience.
2. Decide whether participants may read only original poetry or poetry written by someone else. Have some poetry books on hand.
3. Set some time limits (usually 10 minutes is tops).
4. Recruit students through schools; English and Creative Writings teachers are good resources.
5. Design attractive flyer to be sent to schools, recreation centers, churches, wherever young adults congregate.
6. Encourage teens to invite others that they might know who would be interested.
7. Serve refreshments and let them have fun.
8. A microphone may or may not be necessary, depending on the size of your room.

Paperback and/or Comic Book Swap

Invite YA's to bring in paperbacks and comic books that they no longer want. Teens can discuss and swap them with other teens. You might also use this opportunity to get their input on books, videos, audio's, or other materials to add to the collection. Have some extra paperbacks or comics on hand for teens who come unprepared. Use flyers, your webpage, word of mouth, other teens, etc. to let YA's know when and where this will occur. Posting flyers in comic book and new and used bookstores is effective.

Consider conducting a card swap as an alternative. Post flyers wherever cards are sold.

As always, have some snacks and drinks on hand for the program!



After-Dark Cyber Café

This Cyber Café lock-in program allows teens the “thrill” of being in the library after hours, where they are the focus of attention! Using a “horror” theme, participants surf the net for “chills and thrills” websites as well as take part in a variety of other activities.

As an after-hours library program, this program requires making special arrangements. Registration is required, with participants receiving printed admission tickets when they turn in permissions forms signed by their parents/guardians. Distribute posters throughout the library district.

One staff member is required for every 8 – 10 participants.

1. Duration of program -- 2 hours
2. Age of participants -- 11 to 16 years
3. Food provides atmosphere. (For example: “finger” sandwiches complete with almond sliver fingernails, chocolate spiders and a frozen gummy worm-infested hand in the dragon’s blood punch, and graveyard pudding; recipes are included in the Appendix).
4. Format of program
 - Storytelling – have staff be prepared to tell, to start the ball rolling, but allow participants to take over once they feel comfortable telling scary tales
 - Web surfing – looking for spooky sites
 - Poetry reading – have some ready, prepare yourself in advance
 - Prizes (for best storytelling)

This format is structured to utilize the teen’s talents and ensure that they play an active part in the program. The staff mainly serve as advisors and leaders.

(The St. Charles-City County Library District offered this program as a Halloween theme. The program described here can be adapted to a variety of themes.)

Craft Programs

Craft programs are very popular with teens and make a wonderful addition to the summer reading program. Whatever craft you do at the library, make sure the teens have a finished product to show for their endeavor and the skills to repeat the craft.

There are many different types of craft programs that teens of all ages can do.

Try to get a feel for what is already being offered in your community and try not to duplicate that program. Look through magazines like *Teen*, *Seventeen*, *Jump* or other teen magazines to get ideas. Visit hobby shops or discount stores like Walmart. Ask teens which craft they would like to know how to do in very specific terms. For example, ask them if they want to know how to make a hemp bracelet with beads rather than asking them if they want to learn how to make jewelry. Remember to always look for the hottest new craft and offer it as soon as possible, before it goes out of style.

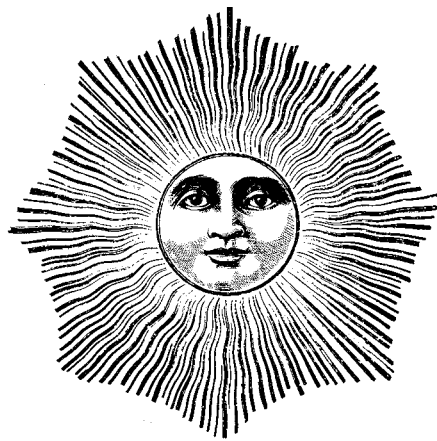
CRAFT PROGRAM IDEAS

Jewelry making *PAINTING* **Marbling** Tie-Dying Painting Clothing
Drawing Cartoon Creation **Pony Bead Creatures** Claymation
Paper-Making Projects
Iron-On Computer Art ORIGAMI Candle Decoration Mehndi
Wood Projects **Yard Decorations** **Nature Crafts**

Programming Tips

1. Make the program as simple as possible. Many teens, although in the same age range, are in different stages of development so their dexterity or skill level might not be as developed as other teens.

2. Make sure that however their product turns out, they know that this was just a learning process and you were giving them the skills to do the craft again on their own. Many first attempts, no matter what age you are, don't turn out well.
3. Give all participants handouts to take with them to do the craft again. Include information about where they can get the supplies for the project and the approximate cost of the project. Try to keep projects low budget so that teens can make them again. Make sure that if you are the one demonstrating the craft that you will be there later to lend a helping hand.
4. Have volunteers (as many as you can get) to assist the teens when they actually start the craft. Make sure that the volunteers are well versed in the craft as well as able to fix any flaws that may occur.
5. Music and food are not a requirement, but they sure help break the ice when you have teens that don't know each other!



Teen Book Discussion Groups

Teens are interested in joining book discussion groups for the same reason adult book discussion groups have grown in popularity—*it's tons of fun!* Try these helpful hints when starting a teen book discussion group in your area.

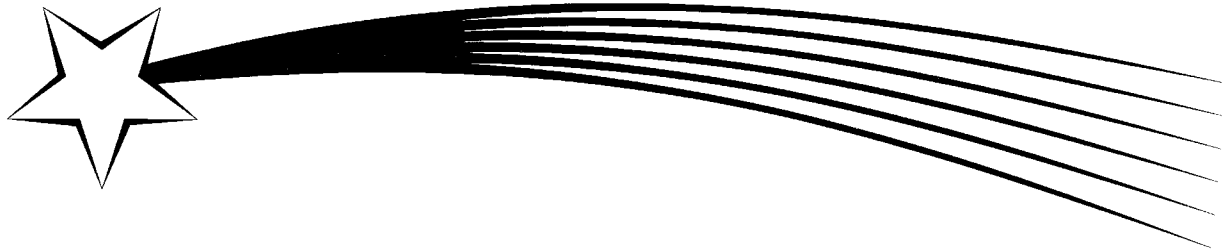
- 📖 Choose a staff member who enjoys working with teens to lead the group. This can be anyone from the reference staff to the circulation staff to your bookshelves.
- 📖 Book discussion groups can be held at the library or at the school.
- 📖 *Provide refreshments.* Food is a drawing factor. Teens enjoy cookies and cokes, bagels and coffee & pizza parties.
- 📖 Provide a comfortable space for teens to relax and lounge as they discuss the book. Try couches and bean bag chairs.
- 📖 Schedule your book discussion group for a day and time that will have the fewest conflicts for your teens. If Monday tends to be a heavy homework night, try Thursday instead.
- 📖 Consistency is a key factor. Make your book discussion group meet on the same day, at the same time, in the same location each month.
- 📖 Work with the school library in allowing teens to pick up the book discussion group books both there and at your library.
- 📖 If possible, purchase a paperback copy of the book discussion book for each teen to read before the first discussion session. If your library budget cannot bear the cost of these books, consider working with a community partner who will help – a local bank, business or health care provider.
- 📖 Consider a genre book discussion group.
- 📖 Let the teens have a say in the decision making process. Solicit their opinions.
- 📖 Choose books that teens are interested in reading, not books that will be seen as too “young” or “juvenile” by your group.
- 📖 ADVERTISE, ADVERTISE, ADVERTISE. Post flyers around the school and any place else teens hang out; send out personalized invitations; put an article in the school

newspaper; and set up displays in the school library and in your library. Be sure to include any program co-sponsors in program promotion.

Remember...

Start out small and don't become discouraged too soon. If it's not working, talk to teens to see how the program can be improved; then revamp, and try again. There is a lot of interest out there in teen book discussion groups, so experiment with what works in your community!

See the Appendix for an annotated list of good discussion books!



Scavenger Hunts

Scavenger hunts are fun for teens to participate in, as well as instructional. They can be used alone, as an activity after a class tour, or as “filler” with other programs.

Anyone can write a scavenger hunt...

1. Keep your questions simple at first.
2. Allow youth to work in groups.
3. Gauge the number of questions to the amount of time allowed.
4. Set a time limit.
5. Provide a variety of questions which will allow for the use of different reference media and search tools.
6. Use your discussion of scavenger hunt answers to instruct on library usage.
7. Praise the teens for their participation and knowledge.
8. Ask participants to provide sources for their answers.
9. Check your library for the answer to every question and list your source on your answer sheet (there's a chance you will forget where you found something!)
10. Have fun with it!
11. A good source for ideas is: *The New Elementary School Librarian's Almanac*, Barbara Farley Bannister, ISBN 0876286058.

The Basics –

1. Make copies of the scavenger hunt questions for as many youth as you believe will be attending.
2. Distribute copies of hunt questions and answers to any library personnel that might be approached by youth for help.
3. Gather your youth and give each one a copy of the hunt questions. They may work in groups of their choosing or alone. If you have a teen who may have a hard time finding answers, quietly suggest to a more knowledgeable youth that he/she takes the other “under their wing.”

4. Give youth a time to be back in the room, usually 15-20 minutes.
5. Set out snacks while your teens are hunting. When they return, discuss hunt answers while they eat.

Remember...

Have fun! Make the hunt like a game.

Keep it simple!

Don't try to make up your questions without finding the answers in your library.

Don't pressure anyone to respond - it will seem too much like school!

See the Appendix for a sample Scavenger Hunt and Variations

Madlibs

Madlibs are great ice-breakers. They serve as good transition activities during programs, and young adults have a great time with them. Rarely can anyone keep a straight face when reading his or her madlib aloud!

Madlib books are readily available at bookstores. In addition, there are lots of madlib sites on the internet.

We have provided a fun madlib in the Appendix to get you started. Use it as an introduction or filler for another program – a scavenger hunt, a read-in, a book discussion group, or just an impromptu activity!

Simply give each person a piece of paper and pencil and ask them to number their paper from 1 to 25. Then read aloud the descriptors on the sample madlib and allow a little time for each person to write down a word fitting the descriptor. Next, hand out copies of the madlib story and have each of the teens read the story aloud, filling in the blanks with the words on their list.

See the Appendix for a sample Madlib

Booktalks

What is a booktalk? It's what you say to someone to convince them to read a book. Why booktalk? To stimulate reading for fun! Some hints to help you prepare a booktalk ...

1. As you read a book, keep a notebook handy to jot down page numbers of important information or good read aloud passages.
2. When you're done with the book, decide if you want to talk it.
3. Write it out. A booktalk can be all your own words, part your words and part book passage or all book passage - whatever feels right to you.
4. When you're done, edit it and cut what you don't have to say.
5. Practice. Practice to your spouse, to the mirror, to yourself, even to the dog, but practice.
6. Your booktalk can be 30 seconds or 5 minutes, whatever you're comfortable with. (Booktalks over 5 minutes lose their intensity.)
7. Feel theatrical? Add music or props to your booktalks. For instance – an ax or hatchet to hold up while booktalking *The Hatchet*. Wear a cowboy hat while booktalking Hardman's *Sunshine Rider: The First Vegetarian Western*. Play a recording of a love song and carry a stuffed cupid doll while booktalking *Thwonk!* by Joan Bauer.

Do...

- ☺ Know your audience - keep it age appropriate.
- ☺ Read and like the book.
- ☺ Whether it's fiction or nonfiction, show the book.
- ☺ Keep it under 5 minutes.
- ☺ Maintain eye contact.
- ☺ Mention the title and author before and after.
- ☺ Tell your audience where they can locate the book in your library, or have copies available to check out.

☺ Leave your audience with a question in their mind.

Don't...

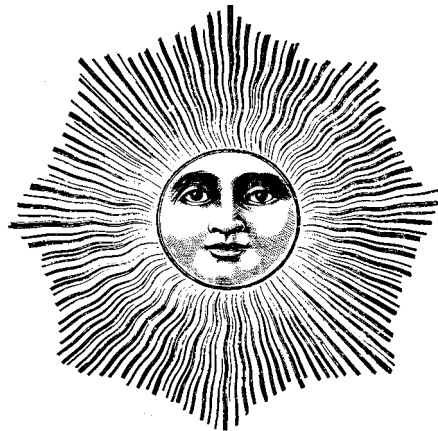
☹ Memorize (unless you're really comfortable with it).

☹ Give away too much.

☹ Get into subplots - keep it simple.

☹ Portray a book as better than it is.

See the Appendix for sample Booktalks and Booktalk Resources



Murder Mystery Programs

Murder Mystery programs allow teens to play an active role in a program as well as providing a terrific creative outlet for them. We have included two mystery programs in the Appendix, each designed a little bit differently. Mystery programs can be conducted using members of your young adult group as participants, in which case the “players” will know each other, or they can be advertised to the general teen public, with each person meeting the other “players” for the first time the day or evening of the program. In reality, groups of friends will probably register together. Limit the number of participants who can register based on the number of parts in the mystery you are conducting.

1. Teens ages 12 to 18 enjoy participating in mystery programs. You can limit the age group based on your community.
2. Allow an hour for most mystery programs.
3. However you decide to conduct the program, attempt to provide each participant in advance with the profile of the character they will play to allow them to become comfortable with their role.
4. Mystery program kits can be purchased through a variety of sources, including the Internet, retail toy and bookstores, and independent vendors.

See the Appendix for “Coroner’s Inquest at the Library” and “The Murder Mystery Game”

